



Diversity: *Discussion Guide*

Overview

The American landscape is growing in diversity, and immigration continues at a steady pace. The result is a rainbow culture composed of many different cultures and people of varying skin tones and ethnic backgrounds. Learning about what makes the United States diverse leads to learning what makes Americans the same. As Maya Angelou says, “We are more alike, my friends, / than we are unlike.”

Classroom Activities

1. Show the video segment “What is Race?” from *Elementary Video Adventure: Race*.
 - **Pre-Viewing Activity: K-W-L Chart:** Before viewing the video, have students write down what they think race is, and have them make K-W-L charts for what they know, want to learn, and have learned. Afterward, see if the video confirmed their definitions or if they learned a new perspective on race. Ask: What does race mean? Is there such a thing as race? Why do humans create categories for people?
 - **Sorting Activity:** Provide students with pieces of paper of various colors cut into different shapes. Do a sorting activity with the class to analyze the process of categorization. First tell students to sort based on color. Then have students sort based on shape. Ask: What insight does this activity give you into the sorting of people into categories of race? Discuss whether race or ethnicity is a more valid way of categorizing.
 - **Discussion:** Write on the board the number “300,000,000.” Tell students there are three hundred million people in the U.S., all different and all the same. Discuss this statement and raise these issues: What is diversity? What is American culture? How are Americans alike and different? Students may introduce ideas of country of origin, religion, language, gender orientation, and ability.
 - **Census Analysis:** Provide students with population data from the most recent status, and point out the categorizations. Note that for the Census white, Asian, African American, American Indian, and Pacific Islander are considered races, while Hispanic origin is a separate category. See if students think the categories

make sense. Ask how a person would fill out the census if their parents are of different races or ethnicities.

- **Bulletin Board:** As a class project, have students bring to class a drawing or photo that helps to highlight something about him or herself that adds to the cultural diversity of the U.S.

2. Show the video segment “Ethnic Groups” from *How to Study Cultures: How Social Organizations Define a Culture*. (Access to *unitedstreaming* is required.)

- **Discussion/Diagram:** Put a web diagram on the board with “culture” in the center circle. Point out that American culture includes many different ethnic backgrounds and subcultures, and ask students to name some. Ask: How does culture differ from ethnicity? (A culture may include people from different ethnic backgrounds). What defines a culture? (Religion, language, traditions, rituals, holidays, food, and clothing all are part of a culture.) What is American culture?
- **Demonstration:** Invite students to demonstrate a custom, food, or item of clothing that represents their ethnic or cultural background. Ask: What we can learn from other cultures?
- **Discussion:** Define ethnic groups as social organizations based on a common heritage. Read aloud this statement from the video: “Ethnic groups can provide identity and unity for individuals in a culture that has experienced much immigration.” Ask students to give examples of how this statement applies to people they know.
- **Drawing:** Note that an early metaphor for American culture was a melting pot and a more current metaphor is a salad bowl. Ask students to explain the difference and to draw their own illustrations to represent American culture.
- **Chart:** Ask students to make diagrams showing the relationship between ethnic groups and culture. Have them explain their diagrams.
- **Interview:** Have students interview a grandparent or other relative who immigrated to the U.S. (or someone who is familiar with the immigration patterns in their family). Have them ask why family members immigrated to the U.S. and how they reacted to this country. You may wish to collect tapes or transcripts of student interviews as part of an oral history project.
- **Mapping:** Have students locate the origins of their ancestors on a map of the world, placing marker codes for each name. Post the map in the classroom.
- **Brainstorming:** Have groups of students brainstorm to make a list of the elements of diversity in your school and community. Have students write down three that they would like to research.



- **Data Analysis:** Point out that the U.S. is a nation of immigrants (except for Native Americans). Present a chart from an almanac showing trends in immigration patterns. The top five countries of birth for U.S. immigrants in 2004 were Mexico, India, Philippines, China, and Vietnam. Compare this with the top five since 1820: Germany, Mexico, United Kingdom, Italy, and Ireland. Have students analyze immigration patterns using a world map for reference.

3. Show the video clip “Japanese in America” from *Destiny Determined: Power and Ritual in Asia*. (Access to *unitedstreaming* is required.)

- **Self-Inventory:** Provide students with a list of attitude statements for them to agree or disagree with. These are some samples to discuss in class:
 Agree Disagree 1. A multicultural atmosphere better prepares students for the future.
 Agree Disagree 2. New immigrants should maintain their culture of origin.
 Agree Disagree 3. New immigrants should adopt their new culture.
 Agree Disagree 4. New immigrants should blend their two cultures.
 Agree Disagree 5. People of different ethnic groups learn from each other.
 Agree Disagree 6. Adjusting to a new culture would be easy.
- **Diagramming:** Have students consider diversity within a single cultural group. Ask students to create a web diagram showing the subgroups of Japanese in the U.S. (e.g., Japanese Americans, non-citizens, temporary residents, second- and third-generation Japanese Americans, people of Japanese and non-Japanese parents, recent immigrants, elderly Japanese, young Japanese).
- **Mapping:** Show Japan on a map and ask how Japan’s geography might affect its culture.
- **Research:** Assign students research topics related to Japanese in the U.S., such as Japanese schooling vs. American schooling, Japanese language vs. English language, Japanese holidays vs. U.S. national holidays. Have them report in class using visual aids.
- **Journal Writing:** Suggest that students put themselves in the place of a child immigrating to the U.S. Have them write a journal entry about the kinds of feelings they would expect to have and adjustments they would expect to make.
- **Survey:** Encourage students to survey classmates about their “rituals.” Discuss rituals as an element of culture.
- **History:** Raise the issue of discrimination against various races and ethnic groups. Have students create a timeline with examples of historical discrimination such as slavery in the U.S., the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, and the Holocaust.

4. Show the video clip “Relating to Peers with Disabilities,” from *Skills for Healthy Living: Dealing with Disabilities*. (Access to *unitedstreaming* is required.)

- **Pre-Video Activity:** Remind students that diversity encompasses more than different ethnic groups and races. Suggest other factors of diversity including physical abilities.
- **Discussion:** Discuss Hunter’s story in the video. Encourage critical thinking with questions such as the following: What obstacles does Hunter face? What attitudes does he have toward his disability? How does he want to be treated? How should people without disabilities act? How representative do you think Hunter is of people with disabilities?
- **Letter Writing:** Ask students to write a letter to Hunter based on their reactions to the video.
- **Diversity Fair:** Invite students to plan a diversity fair for your school to introduce different cultures and build awareness of the value of diversity. Your students may also wish to start an organization at your school for bringing people together from different backgrounds to learn from each other.
- **Literature:** Study literature related to disabilities and diversity including such moving writings as “Three Days to See” from Helen Keller’s famous autobiography *The Story of My Life*, Maya Angelou’s poem “Human Family,” and essays by Richard Rodriguez about ethnicity and cultural identity. Encourage students to read the literature of many different cultures.
- **Glossary:** Have students summarize what they have learned from their study of diversity. Review terms and have them create flashcards for remembering terms such as:

culture	ethnicity	multicultural
diversity	heritage	ritual
race	immigration	
ethnic group	melting pot	

Academic Standards

This discussion guide addresses the following national standards:

National Council for the Social Studies

<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/>



- Culture
- Time, Continuity, and Change
- People, Places, and Environment.

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

- Language Arts
- Writing: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process, gathers and uses information for research purposes
- Reading: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts
- Listening and Speaking: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes
- Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.

